

A
SERMON
Preached before the
QUEEN
AT
WHITE-HALL;

BY
THO. STAYNOE, B. D. and Chaplain in
Ordinary to their MAJESTIES.

AND
Printed by Her MAJESTIES
Command.

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ACTS, XXVII. 8.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

THE Words are part of S. Paul's Apology before *Festus* and *Agrippa*; wherein he undertakes a Defence of *himself*, and his *Doctrine*; and like a faithful Minister of Christ endeavours no less the Security of his *Faith*, than of his *Life*. For because it would be no advantage to him, either to have fought with Beasts at *Ephesus*, as in the nineteenth of the *Acts*; or at *Jerusalem*, as we find it here in the Context, unless the Dead should rise; therefore he takes care so to defend his Cause in *this World*, as to provide for his Interest in the *next*; and tho he should lose his Life for the Doctrine of the Resurrection; yet to purchase a more glorious Life, when that Doctrine should be accomplished, and so his Hopes be turned into Possession. And therefore tho at his first Apprehension at *Jerusalem*, the Rabble cried out, That he was the man, who taught all men every where against the People, the Law, and the Temple, *Act. xxi. 28.* that is, that he was, in their

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sense,

sense, a Christian ; yet he takes no care to answer them in those Matters, but instead of all other Points of his Doctrine, he undertakes a Defence of the Resurrection ; partly out of an honest fraud to work over the Scribes and Pharisees to his part against the Sadduces, who denied it ; but chiefly because it is one of the main Pillars of our Christianity : for, *If Christ be not risen , our Faith is vain , we are yet in our sins ,* as he himself tells us in the first of the *Corinthians*, chap. xv. vers. 17. And so likewise after he had convinced the *Athenians* of their Ignorance, in inscribing an Altar to the *unknown God* ; and by better reasons than what their Philosophy had furnished them with, had shewed them the way of coming to the knowledge of the true one ; he proceeds to persuade them to Repentance, from the Doctrine of the last Judgment (that, with which this poor Prisoner made *Felix*, tho his Judge, tremble) and then confirms all with the Argument in my Text, that is, with the Resurrection. But those Philosophers (tho they spent their time in nothing else, but only to hear, or to tell some new thing,) yet could not away with this new Doctrine. It was indeed a Doctrine, that agreed not with their Notions, and carried in it something of Contradiction to the Axioms of some of their Schools ; and therefore when they heard of it, some of those wise Men

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gave him the Fools Reply, and mocked: and others said, *We will hear thee again of this matter.* And tho a little longer attention might have furnished them with an undeniable demonstration of his Assertion, yet their prejudice took away their patience, and they could not endure to hear so much as an offer of proof for that, which seemed to them to be in the number of Impossibilities. But *S. Paul*, who was guided by a better Spirit, and no less Learning, had good reason to be of another Persuasion, and when he had liberty to speak freely for himself, as here to *Agrippa*, he tells the King, that he knew this also, forasmuch as none of these things were hidden from him, for this thing was not done in a corner. And therefore after his Complement to the King, and some previous Discourse touching his former manner of Life, and his present Inditement, he did but act according to the Rules of the best Reason, and the best Religion, when he began his Defence with this close Interrogation, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*

Tho it adds to the Reputation of Truth, that every Falshood desires to appear under its likeness, yet many times it purchases this Reputation too dear; and because the Cheat has been frequently practised, it has not seldom brought Truth it self under the suspicion of Falshood. And if the Truth
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so questioned prove a matter of Fact, as is the Resurrection, then the pretences made use of to disprove its Reality, must either be by invalidating the Testimony of such who bear witness to it, or else by denying the possibility of the thing it self. Now because the History of the Resurrection stands confirmed upon such good Testimony, that he, who will dare to deny that, may with the same confidence deny, that ever there were such Men as *Pompey*, or *Julius Caesar*; therefore all the Enemies of this Doctrine have proceeded in the latter way, and have endeavoured to make it out, that there never *was*, or ever *will* be any Resurrection, because there *cannot* be. And it is not unlikely, that the *Athenians* laughed at our Apostles Discourse upon this very account, and that they therefore thought him worthy of their Contempt, because (as they conceived) he brought them a story, which carried contradiction enough in it self for its own Confutation, and such Circumstances, which might sufficiently disprove its Substance. But had they more seriously examined the Matter (tho it had been by no better Light than that of common Reason,) they might perhaps have given themselves the same satisfaction, which *Dionysius the Areopagite* then did, and so have been brought over to *S. Paul's* Persuasion. For then certainly they could not have judged this Truth

to have been out of the compass of a Possibility, nor have thought it Incredible, that God should raise the Dead.

It must therefore be our present business to prove the possibility of a Resurrection; that the Doctrine of it has no Absurdity in it self, nor carries any Contradiction to Reason; which if it shall appear, then I presume, that we may be allowed to infer, that it may be believed; and that without any force offered to the Rules of Reasoning, we may from its Possibility argue its Credibility. For though we cannot justly require any man to believe, that a thing therefore is, because it appears to him to be possible; yet it is certain, that he must believe the thing as it appears to him, and that therefore, if it *seems* to him to be possible, he must believe it to be so. For this Belief amounts to no more, than an Assent to an Identical Proposition, and therefore no one can shake it off, but he, that will have the Confidence or Stupidity to deny that a Man is a Man. But then, if his Evidence shall proceed farther, and to the Reasons, that the thing *may* be, shall be added sufficient Testimony, that it *has been*; and the Testimony shall likewise prove such, as he cannot in Reason deny, then his Assent must go farther likewise; and from believing, that it *may* be, he must proceed to believe, that it *is*. So that in asserting the Truth of the Resurrection, there are Two things

things to be made out ; first the *possibility* of the Fact, and then the *Fact* it self ; whereof the *first* is to be asserted by *Reason*, the *second* by *Sense* or *Testimony* : The *first* to make the thing *credible* only, and the *second* to make it be actually believed.

And it is the first of these, which is the Subject of my Text, which the Apostle propounds by way of Interrogation, *Why should it seem a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the Dead?* Which Question implies, First, A strong Presumption, that there was no Reason, why any man should disbelieve the Resurrection ; and Secondly, A Reason of this Presumption, because God should raise the Dead. I shall begin with the last, and carry on the Apostles Argument, and thereby endeavor to evince, that it is no incredible thing, that God should raise the Dead.

He that believes the first Article of our Creed, that God made Heaven and Earth (as every one must needs do, unless they will abjure their Reason) cannot chuse but believe him to be Omnipotent : Omnipotence being nothing else in its first Notion, but a Power of doing or making all things. For as for what farther Actions of his Almighty Power God may have since exerted, whether in preserving the World so created, or in concurring to the particular Actions of every individual Agent, or the like ; I shall leave it to the Schools, as being too nice, and too

too impertinet to our present purpose to be here handled. For it is enough for our Design, if there be no greater Power required to raise a Man from the *Grave* on the *last* day, than to raise him from the *Earth* on the *sixth*; and therefore whoever can believe the *last*, may without straining his Reason believe the *first*. And indeed, if we carry our thoughts a little backward in considering the Creation of the first Man, that as he was made out of the *Earth*; so that *Earth* was but a few days before made out of nothing; we shall find the Resurrection a Doctrine of a more easie belief than the Creation, and that we can better apprehend, how a Man may be restored out of something, than made at first out of nothing: so that if we may allow any Gradations of Power in the several Actions of Omnipotence, there will to our Reasons appear less of the Almighty Power in the Resurrection, than in the Creation, and therefore it must needs seem more easie for God to re-make the Man, than at first to make him; to which if we add this farther Consideration, that the Men that *are now*, and *have been formerly* made, are (if I may so speak) a Samplar or Pattern for those that shall be restored in the Resurrection; it will yet add something to the easiness of our Conceptions, and we may by that means apprehend the *Restitution* of Mankind by the same God, who at first made it a more feasible Performance, than the *first*

making of it. Forasmuch as we cannot but conceive it a much more easie matter to frame a Building *with* a Model, than *without* one. And though God in his right Notion cannot be conceived to stand in need of any Samplar, as having in himself the Eternal Ideas of all future Productions; yet forasmuch as we cannot pass our Judgment upon any Action any farther than the short-sightedness of our Apprehensions will allow, this Notion must needs facilitate our Conceptions of the Resurrection, and make it seem to us an Action more easie to be accomplished than that of Creation. Though thus much may be farther alledged in the behalf of this Notion, that God himself, when he was about to make the first Man, was pleased in a manner to set himself a Pattern, when he said, *Let us make man after our own Image.* Hence therefore we may infer, that if there be a God (which whoever denies is no more an Enemy to the Resurrection, than to all Religion, and which at present we suppose, as being too much out of our way to be proved at this time) Nay, if there be a God, who was the first Author of all things, and consequently of an Almighty Power, we have then no Reason to doubt the possibility of a Resurrection; forasmuch as that Omnipotence can restore a thing to its former being, which has once lost it, with the same, nay, with more ease. (I speak after the manner of Men, and say with
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more ease) than he could speak it at first out of nothing, and give it a Being by his bare Fiat, when it had nothing else but Emptiness to be its Parent. And therefore it cannot seem incredible to any Man, that God should raise the Dead. And hence it is that our Saviour himself, who was the first Fruits of them that slept, fetches his Argument against the Sadduces, who opposed his Doctrine. For after they had urged to him their Argument concerning the Woman and her seven Husbands, he returns them this short but close Answer in the 22th. of St. Matt. and 29th. vers. *Ye do therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, nor the power of God.* In the first part of which Answer he utterly overthrows their Argument, and in the second their Opinion, forasmuch as had they known the Power of God, they could not have disbelieved the possibility of a Resurrection. And indeed, they that do, may without any breach of Charity, be presumed to be Atheists. For either they must fantasie to themselves no God at all to cause a Resurrection; or else such a God, whose Power is not of so large an Extent, as to produce so great an Action: whereof the first proclaims them Atheists, and the second infers them such, as conceiving to themselves a God, whose Nature must argue him of Weakness and Imperfection, and so destroying the Notion of a Deity; that is, whom in pretence they call a God, but whom in reality

lity they say is *none*. But if still they pretend to the Confession of a *Diety*, and then refer their denial of the Resurrection not to his *Power*, but to his *Will*; They must first prove that he has manifested his Will on their side, before they can build any Argument upon it; which if they do not, (as indeed no Records will furnish them with Testimony sufficient to do it) then they must submit to what we alledge as his revealed Will in this Case, and confess, that our Possession is more than eleven Points of the Law.

But to proceed. The Second Argument, which we urge from God's Power for the possibility of a Resurrection, shall be taken from our first Formation in the Womb. Whereof, if we consider the Contrivance and Workmanship, though we may still stand amazed, how the Resurrection should be performed, yet we may lay aside all doubts of its possibility; forasmuch as there is no difficulty in the Restitution of these Vessels of Clay, which may not be found in the *first framing* of them. *David*, who was a Man after God's own Heart, and who being divinely inspired may be presumed to know as much of his mind, as those we argue against, was surpris'd with Admiration, and astonishment, when he looked back to his first beginning, and considered that he was fearfully and wonderfully made. And indeed the best Account that he gives us of it, is that he was
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made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lower parts of the Earth, that is, (though in a better Expression) he knew not how. For though Philosophers pretend to farther Discoveries, and endeavor to cheat themselves and others with empty words, which exprels nothing but their own Ignorance, though they try to unravel the Almighty's Work by Anatomy, and by that means endeavor to trace it to its first beginning, yet the upshot of their knowledg there amounts to no more than a *vis pulsifica, à virtus ossifica*; and the like insignificant Phrases, which afford us nothing but sounds, and leave us in the dark still, only with a greater noise. And indeed the very best of those who have handled this Subject, do only give us an account of what is produced first, and what last; putting us off with the work it self, and very poorly describing the Effect, but never so much as meddling with what they so much pretend to, which is the manner of producing it. And here we challenge the Men of the greatest Atheism and the greatest Learning to give us any tolerable Account, how upon the Incubation of the Hen, the Heat (which to our best Apprehensions is but a confused Expiration) ranges it self into different Parties, how each Party chuses that part of the matter, which it is to form; after what manner it works upon it, and brings it into the shape, figure, consistency, and vital Operations, which it afterwards attains, and

and how out of all the parts so framed the living Creature is at last composed, and then we'll undertake to give an Account, how God does raise the Dead. For he that performs the *first* Task will teach any Man to perform the *latter*; and when he has shewed us, how all the several parts of the Body are ranged in the *Generation* of it, he has chalked us out the way to say just the same things in its Resurrection. Especially, if we add this Consideration to the former: That the several parts of matter, out of which our Bodies are now *composed*, were once as much scattered and confused, as those little dusts can be presumed to be, out of which the Body is to be restored. For if Generation and Nutrition be but the same thing, (as indeed the one is but being nourished in the Womb, and the other out of it) then we may with a very slight Observation discover, out of how many several places we pick up our Bodies, and by piece-meal eat that, which is to be our selves. So that a Man does but glean the Substance, out of which he consists, and is made up by a piece of every Country, whom he feeds. But if his Inclinations, Duty, or Necessity confine him to one place, and he does not go up and down the World in an undiscovered Search after the several parts of his Body, why then those parts will come to him, and by an Almighty Providence from several Quarters of the World all meet together for his

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Constitution. So that some Earth, which lies now in the *Indies*, may the next Year be a part of our Flesh; and a Shower of Rain, which falls this Year in the *Canaries*, may after the next Vintage refresh our Spirits here in *England*. All which is such a real Resurrection, that the Resurrection is not more it self. For when Time adds a new day to our Lives, we die to the day that is past; and by our natural Food gathered from all Quarters of the World, restore to our selves so much of our bodies as the former day had devoured; which may take away our unbelief, how at the Resurrection our scattered parts shall be recalled to an Union, and receive a Summons from Omnipotence to meet together for our second Constitution: So that if Men did not shut their Eyes to Truth, and disbelieve their own Experience, they need not doubt the possibility of a Resurrection, or think that that cannot be done on the *last* day, which we see done *every* day. Add to this, that the Concurrence of all those several parts of the Matter, which go to the making up of the Body, is not caused by blind Chance, because it is notorious, that by Counsel and Design they are all conducted to a certain End, that is they are all convey'd through several elegant Shapes and Forms, till by thousands of turns and windings, and almost innumerable preparative Alterations the last Design is brought about, and out of all the Man finished. Which strange and
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miraculous Labyrinth of Providence, tho' it puzzle our Understandings, and confounds them, whenever they endeavour to carry their search quite through it, yet it may so far satisfy them too, as that his knowledge, who is the Author of so rare and unintelligible Workmanship, as far exceeds ours, as that it puzzles us as much to find out a Resemblance of the Disparity, as to understand the Effects of its Contrivance. And as for those, who ascribe this rare Artifice to blind chance, it is because themselves are blind; and judge as they do that are born so; who understand no such thing as Light, not because there *is* none, but because they *see* none. And indeed did not Mens Obstinacy darken their Understandings, that, which may be known of God, is in those and such like his Works manifested to them: for God hath shewed it unto them, as the Apostle speaks: for the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead, even that Power that made Men at *first*, and that Power that both can and will *raise* them at the *last*. And thus far we have endeavoured to assert the possibility of a Resurrection, from the Apostles Argument in the Text, taken from God's Power, which can do what it has done already, and therefore can remake the same Men, which it formerly made, whether it

were by that more confessed Act of Omnipotence, Creation; or else in a more ordinary and usual way, and more suitable to that Course, into which the God of Nature has put the things of this World.

Proceed we therefore in the next place to the interrogatory part of our Text, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you?* In which Question we told you was implied a strong presumption, that there was no reason, why any man should disbelieve the Resurrection: which presumption, tho it were by the Apostle grounded upon very solid reason, to wit, God's Omnipotence, as we have already discoursed; yet it contains more in it than so; and gives us a fair hint, that all that can be pretended against the possibility of a Resurrection, will rise no higher than to a pretence; and will in reality want that Evidence, which is required to make a good proof. It must therefore be our next business to inquire what those Reasons are, that usually make men doubt the possibility of a Resurrection, and withal, whether they carry so much force with them, as to make good that to which they pretend.

And here we must alledge, that for one Reason, which every one but they, who make use of it, will confess to be none, and that is, mens fears. For when some Men have so spent their Lives, that it is become irksome to them, so much as but to

think of coming to an Account ; then they endeavour to persuade themselves, that there shall be no last Judgment, that Death will be the end of all things, and that in their latter end they shall be no better than the Beasts that perish. And tho it may be the first ground for such a thought were nothing more, but because they had heard some one of more wickedness and Learning say so, yet because their wicked Lives have made the truth of the Assertion more *desirable*, they will pretend it to be infallible ; and tho at first it only made them *doubtful*, yet by a little time, and great wishes it came to make them *certain* ; and so at length they believe it as firmly, as a Liar, after several repetitions, does his own story. Thus their Hopes make their Creed, and they come to believe their Resurrection impossible, not that ever they were convinced, that it *was* so, but because they wished, that it *had* been so. For as we easily believe those things we *desire* ; so (provided the danger be yet at a distance) we are not willing to *believe* those things we *fear* ; and because the last Judgment is likely to prove not only terrible, but intolerable too to such persons ; therefore they will not be persuaded to admit it into their Creed, but by renouncing the Doctrine of the Resurrection, they'll even damn the last Judgment it self. But such a Persuasion so grounded, carries its own Confutation with it : And when the first

first Disbelief of the Resurrection is built upon nothing else, but a guilty Horror of its Effects; it's a shrewd proof, that the Truth, and not the Falshood of it, was that that drove such Men into their Infidelity; and that at present they do not see it possible, not because it is not so, but because they shut their Eyes.

The second Reason, why some Men will not believe the possibility of the Resurrection, is want of Experience in something of the like Nature, and they will therefore not believe that it *can* be, because their Senses never yet informed them, that it *has* been. The Objection I have laid down in short; and yet as short as it is, it contains in it a great deal of *Weakness*; a great deal of *Folly*, and a great deal of *Pride*. It is therefore weak, because, tho we were neither present at *Lazarus*, nor our Saviour's Resurrection, and never *saw* the Miracle; yet we know not, but we *may* see it. But taking it as a thing granted and true, that we shall never see it; yet we cannot but know, that as some things have been discovered to future Times, of which the foregoing were wholly ignorant; so former Ages have discovered those things which have lain hid to their posterity; of both which we may furnish our selves with Instances enough out of *Pancirollus*. And therefore it must needs be *weakness*, for that reason alone, to conclude upon the impossibility of any

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thing, because we our selves have not been Eyewitnesses to it. And as it is a *weakness* so to do in *any* Case, so to do so in the *present* Case must needs be a *folly*. For so it must be, therefore only to reject the Belief of a *future possibility*, because it is not a *present certainty*, when, if such possibility should *never* come to pass, our Belief of it, tho (if we live ill) it must make us uneasy to our selves *here*; yet whether we live ill or well, can bring upon us no *possible*, much less no *eternal* mischief hereafter: whereas if such possibility should ever come to pass, our *Disbelief* of it is as good as certain to prove fatal to our future and everlasting Happiness. For in such a case it will be no hard matter to conceive, how dismal the Surprise will be to those Men, who would not believe it upon any other motive than that of their Senses; nor admit of any other Conviction in the case, than what their sad experience of the last day shall bring along with it. But this is not all yet; for it is not only *weakness* and *folly*, but it is moreover *pride* and *arrogance* therefore to deny a future possibility, because our own experience has not as yet made us Witnesses to the Truth of it. For whoever shall be so conceited, as to judge of the Truth of all possibilities by no other Standard than his own Experience, may with Justice enough be thought to have more *Pride* than *Knowledge*; and he must think himself to have

have a very large Soul, who shall presume to confine all Truths within the compass of his own Observation: Tho his Observation must be very little too, who has not found out something both in Art and Nature, that may teach him to believe the Resurrection possible. Thus Quicksilver (if I may crave leave to offer you an Instance in Art) after it is brought to a Consistency, is so far from not being capable of being restored to its first form, that it is almost impossible in any Operation upon it, not to do it: but so to fix it, as that it cannot be restored, is reckoned among the Mysteries of the *Adepti*, and as such is concealed from all others, as profane, and so unworthy of it. Tho in the meantime, there are a great many wise Men, and great Philosophers too, who think, that the Religion and Mystery of this great Reservedness and Secresie arises from nothing else, but an absolute Inability of making any Discovery at all. And so, when the Spring revives the Plants, and cloaths them again with their lost Beauty, it affords us a very fair Resemblance of the Resurrection, and is in it self as great a miracle, and the manner of its performance as impossible to be understood. But such is some Mens folly, that those Miracles, which they see every day, they *disregard*; and those, which they never see, they *disbelieve*.

The third, and indeed none of the least Reasons, that has kept off many Men from believing the possibility of a Resurrection, does arise from those Explications, that such Men have given us of it, who yet have expressly maintained it. For if we may be permitted to speak a bold Truth, most of those who have professedly asserted a Resurrection, have notwithstanding been too nice and critical in their Speculations about it; and have presumed too much upon their Philosophical Abilities, when after they have given us sufficient proof of the *thing* it self, they have over and above pretended to give us an account of the *manner*, how it is brought to pass. Now in such a Case, if the Performance does fall short of the Attempt, the Mischief that follows is, that they not only betray their own Weakness, by endeavouring to advance the Opinion of their Knowledge; but over and above by betraying that Weakness, they do betray the Cause of Truth too. For not only common and ordinary Understandings, but in many Cases even wise Men too, are apt to judge of the Merits of the Cause by the Performances of those, that undertake the Defence of it. And if those Performances do prove such, as do betray the Weakness of the Advocate; that very Weakness, when so discovered, will be too apt to betray the Justice or Truth of the Cause.

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And to be short and clear: among such unhappy Undertakers, I cannot but reckon those, who have stiffly and obstinately maintained, that our Bodies in the Resurrection shall be restored the same numerical Bodies in all their parts. Which, whether it be true or false, I do not at present pretend to determine; because as the Notion of Omnipotence in general does exceed the Grasp of our Understandings, so the particular ways and manners, in which it does exert it self, do so much more. And therefore my Business at present is only to shew, that such a nice Speculation is too frivolous and superfluous to be incorporated into our Creed, and by that means to be obtruded upon us as an Article of our Christian Faith. For we may even dare to refer the Matter to the Arbitration of common Sense, whether it be not sufficient to warrant our Faith in this point to be truly Christian, if we do but once firmly believe, that God both *can* and will raise the Dead. And he, who carries his Faith so far, cannot without injustice be esteemed an Infidel, as to this Branch of his Creed; tho perhaps he may still remain so, as to some speculative Additions and Superstructions, that vain Philosophy has built upon it. And that, that may serve to warrant the Sufficiency of our Faith, if we do only believe the Resurrection in the lump, without descending to the particular manner, how it shall be accomplished,

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is this: That since the design of the Resurrection is only to render to every Man according to what he has done in the flesh, whether good or evil; we must confess, that it conduces nothing to this Design, whether or no the Man at his Resurrection be critically made up of all those parts of the Matter, of which his Body consisted at his Dissolution: because we may be assured, and that too by *experience*, that a Man may be punished *now* for a crime that he committed twenty years since, and that too with true and real sense of Pain, tho most of the parts of his Body have been changed since that time. And we may be assured by Reason, that if the *Alteration* of several parts of his Body makes no difference, as to the Case of Justice, that then the difference would have been as little, had there been *no* Change of the parts at all. And therefore without mazing and puzzling our selves with the Critical and Grammatical Import of the Word Resurrection (which has given occasion to many nice and frivolous Speculations in the present Case) since our *Religion* has acquainted us, that the Resurrection is designed in order to a last Judgment; and since our *Reason*, and therefore much more our *Faith* can easily comply with such a Design; we may as well rest satisfied, that there may be a Resurrection, whether or no the parts of the Body shall be all the same then, that they

that they were at any time in this Life; as we may be satisfied, that a Man, as to all the Business and Designs of Justice, is the same this year, that he was the last; tho we know in the mean time, that his continual decays by expiration, and restoration by eating and drinking does give us a far different matter under the last years Representation. And therefore in such a Case to endeavour upon the Account of those Alterations to prove the Man not to be the same he was formerly, must needs be impertinent, when his own Memory, Understanding and Senses do most experimentally assure him, that he is so. Upon the Result of all then, we may adventure to conclude, that all the Disputes concerning a numerical Resurrection, either *pro* or *con*, do only raise a great deal of Dust, which serves for no other purpose, but to confound our Eyesight, and so to render both our Notion of it the more disturbed, and our Faith in it the more doubtful.

But this is not all yet; for it is not only *unnecessary*, but it is also *Presumptuous* in it *self*, and *prejudicial* to *Christianity* to undertake to give a punctual Account, how, and after what manner the Dead are raised up. Alas, we know not, how Nature produces any one blade of Grass, or any one Ear of Corn; and how then shall we trace out the more refined Works of God, or pretend to discover those

Miracles of his Omnipotence, which he has concealed from us in the darkness, and recesses of the Grave. And if the ordinary Works of Nature, which are daily brought forth, and therefore also daily exposed to our diligence and to our disquisition, do notwithstanding puzzle our most elaborate and philosophical Enquiries; methinks our Experience of our blindness in such a Case might teach us so much Modesty, as to engage us to believe, that Omnipotence can raise the Dead, though we find that we cannot carry our search so far as to know critically the manner and contrivance by which it does it. And I do the rather inculcate this, because those, who pretend to give us an exact Account, how, and in what manner the Dead are raised up, do by that means expose our Faith to the attempts of Atheism, and give it a fair opportunity of striking at this great Article of our Creed through their Opinions. And therefore, if we would not have our Faith shaken by any such attempts, our safest way to tread in will be this: That since God in his Word has assured us, that so it *has* been, and that so it *shall* be; and since Reason vouches, that so it may be, I say upon these accounts to reckon, that our Belief of it does stand upon firm and sufficient Foundations; though our Curiosity does not carry us so far, as to puzzle our selves with the manner how it shall be brought to pass.

Upon

Upon the whole we may conclude, that punctually to determine, that the parts that make up the Body, *shall*, or *shall not* be all the same with those, out of which it was formerly made, that they shall be ranged just in the same order, and the like, may be a piece of Curiosity or vain Philosophy; but cannot be Religion; neither indeed will it receive any Warrant, either from the Scripture or any acknowledged Creed, whether it be the Apostles, the *Nicene*, or even that of *Athanasius* it self. Upon which Account (that I may hint that by the by) it should highly concern all those, to whom the Oracles of God are intrusted, to be watchful over their Opinions as well as their Behavior; because by a false Doctrine no less than by a wicked Life, they may give the Enemies of God and Goodness occasion to blaspheme, confirm an Atheist and make him confident, and it may be stagger, if not quite overthrow the Faith of a weaker Christian. And indeed by such things the Church of Christ may suffer as much Prejudice, as it did by the *piæ fraudes* of the Primitive and some later Christians. For though in both the meaning may be honest, yet when the weakness in the first, and the fraud in the last comes once to be detected, it renders the truth of Religion doubtful at last, and sometimes also contemptible.

And thus far we have proceeded to shew the insufficiency of those Cavils, that are usually made

against the possibility of the Resurrection : And though we might have gone farther on this part of our Text, and have reckoned up more Objections ; yet we shall stop here, partly because the task would be tedious, and therefore troublesome ; but chiefly because little or nothing can be alledged, but what may come under one of these already mentioned, or else receive a satisfactory Answer from the former part of our Discourse.

One Remark I would leave with you before I conclude, and that is this ; That we have not in our Attempt to make out the possibility of the Resurrection offered any Inferences taken from the matter of Fact. For though the most certain way to prove that it *may* be, is to prove that it has been ; yet because the Men of our times have not seen it themselves, and so may (notwithstanding such proof) doubt the Veracity of former Ages ; therefore we hope it may not be thought impertinent to add so much credit to their Historical Relations, as by Reason (which is cotemporary to every Age of Men) to assert the possibility of it ; which when it is done, there can be no other Pretences against the belief of the thing, than there can be, that there never was such a City as *Ninevé* built, because there are no remains of it in the present Age.

The Use that we may make of this Discourse is, *first*, Not to be too forward in condemning such Truths,

Truths, which the Scripture and the constant Doctrine of the Church have taught us; and to have a care, that our Censure of those Articles of our Christian Faith, which may at first sight startle our Apprehensions, do not out-run our due Examination; and so make us fix those Errors upon our Creed, which are only in our own or other mens Thoughts; which Caution may be of great use to all those, whom a conceit in their own Wit and Parts may too much incline to condemn received Truths. For though it be ridiculous in all other matters, yet there are but too many in the World, who affect a singularity in their Opinions, and in pursuit of such their Affectation are very busily employed in framing some little fallacies and cavils against such Truths, that so they may the more plausibly set up their own Opinions in their stead. Which humor, though it may sometimes be *innocent* in indifferent things; and such as are purely Philosophical; yet when it grows extravagant, and engages it self in more serious matters, and such as concern Religion it may prove *dangerous*. And it will concern every Man to have a care, that his Soul be not too witty in contriving its own Destruction, that is, in putting fallacies upon it self, which will be confuted by a dolcful Eternity.

The second Use, that we may make of what has been said, is, to have a care, that we be not too easily

sily deceived by those little Cavils, that are but too
 usually made against the Articles of our Creed. Be-
 cause it is not only the Fate of Religion, but of most
 things in the World (when once they have been
 brought under Disputation) to be perplexed with
 Difficulties, which though sometimes they will
 hardly admit a clear *Solution*, yet can never be so
 urged, as to a *sober* Mind to work a *Conviction*. For
 though *Zeno*, or any other Sceptick should alledge
 such Arguments against the possibility of Motion,
 as no skill in Logick can resolve, yet they can never
 win an Assent against Experience, and though the
subtillest head can never *answer* them, yet the *weakest*
 will never *believe* them. And here it may be worth
 our while to take notice, that all such Reasons,
 which are brought against known and demonstra-
 ble Truths (among which, I hope, it will be no
 Presumption to reckon the possibility of a Resurre-
 ction) I say such Reasons as are brought against de-
 monstrable Truths, are never brought against the
 things themselves; but only against the *manner* of
 their Production, or Explication; and therefore
 should be look'd upon rather as Difficulties than
 Arguments, which may perhaps *puzzle* our *thoughts*,
 but can never *persuade* our *Judgments*. And there-
 fore the Atheist has very little cause to Triumph in
 the strength of such Arguments (and I will be
 bold to say, that all his are such, especially in the
 case

case of the Resurrection) because he does only perplex the thing, but not confute it; and upon that account may sometimes baffle the *Defendant*, but will never be able to baffle the *Cause*. And upon this account there can be no better way to deal with such Persons than to encounter difficulty with difficulty; and by the intricacies in Nature to parallel, as well as we can the *Mysteries* of Religion. But of this more before.

The third and last Use, that we may make of what has been said, is of a nearer concern, and that is so to look to our Lives and Conversations upon the account only of the possibility of a Resurrection, as if we certainly knew, that we should one day give an Account of every thing, that we had done in the Flesh, whether Good or Evil. For let us only put the case that there may or may not be a Resurrection, that is, that a Resurrection is only possible; yet it will be but common Prudence to secure the Event, that is, to live as if it were certain, and so to put our Salvation out of the reach of Chance, and not hazard our Eternity upon as great an Uncertainty, as the lot of a Die. And indeed upon this very Account, he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely: As he lived holily, so he dies peaceably; and can promise himself as good rest as any other, if he never awakes more; but if he does, is more secure of an everlasting Happiness. And this may be the Reason,

Reason, why the sturdiest Atheist shrinks and trembles at the approach of Death; and though it may be, he will not even then be brought to *confess* a God, yet he cannot chuse but *doubt* one; and that doubt will plung him into as great Agonies of Soul, as Conviction, or Dispair it self. And truly for those who will not know God *here*, it will be a dismal return at the last day, *Depart from me, for I know you not.*

Let us therefore beseech Almighty God, that we may in this our Day learn and practise those things, that concern our Peace; *That when that great and terrible Day of the Lord shall come, we may, as the Apostle speaks, be caught up in the Air to meet the Lord, and with Angels, and Archangels, and all the Heavenly Host may praise him, who sitteth upon the Throne, and the Lamb for evermore.*

F I N I S.

